

Members

Rep. Sheila Klinker, Chairperson
Rep. Greg Simms
Rep. Rochelle Vandenburg
Rep. Robert Behning
Rep. Dan Leonard
Rep. Jeffrey Thompson
Sen. Connie Lawson
Sen. Greg Walker
Sen. Brent Waltz, Vice-Chairperson
Sen. Robert Deig
Sen. Sue Errington
Sen. Karen Tallian



INTERIM STUDY COMMITTEE ON ADULT EDUCATION ISSUES

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Authority: P.L. 29-2008 (HEA 1193-2008)

MEETING MINUTES¹

Meeting Date: July 30, 2008
Meeting Time: 1:00 P.M.
Meeting Place: State House, 200 W. Washington
St., Room 233
Meeting City: Indianapolis, Indiana
Meeting Number: 1

Members Present: Rep. Sheila Klinker, Chairperson; Rep. Greg Simms; Rep. Rochelle Vandenburg; Rep. Robert Behning; Rep. Dan Leonard; Rep. Jeffrey Thompson; Sen. Greg Walker; Sen. Brent Waltz, Vice-Chairperson; Sen. Robert Deig; Sen. Sue Errington; Sen. Karen Tallian.

Members Absent: Sen. Connie Lawson.

Representative Sheila Klinker, the Committee Chair, called the first meeting of the Committee to order shortly after 1:00 p.m.

Representative Klinker stated that the next meeting of the Committee is tentatively scheduled for September 3, 2008, at 1:00 p.m.

Representative Klinker then distributed to Committee members copies of a letter from Janet Curley, a board member of the Indiana Literacy Association. (See Exhibit A.) She

¹ Exhibits and other materials referenced in these minutes can be inspected and copied in the Legislative Information Center in Room 230 of the State House in Indianapolis, Indiana. Requests for copies may be mailed to the Legislative Information Center, Legislative Services Agency, 200 West Washington Street, Indianapolis, IN 46204-2789. A fee of \$0.15 per page and mailing costs will be charged for copies. These minutes are also available on the Internet at the General Assembly homepage. The URL address of the General Assembly homepage is <http://www.in.gov/legislative/>. No fee is charged for viewing, downloading, or printing minutes from the Internet.

also recognized Rochelle Finzel of the Indiana Institute for Working Families, who distributed a paper, "More than Just A GED". (See Exhibit B.)

After members of the Committee introduced themselves, Representative Klinker recognized Representative Greg Simms, the author of HEA 1193-2008, the bill that established the Committee.

Representative Simms stated that Portage Township Schools, which provides adult education services, has been experiencing shortfalls because persons from outside the school district are coming to the district for these services. He explained that the premise of HEA 1193-2008 as introduced was to charge other school districts for the cost of providing adult education services to persons from outside the school district. Representative Simms noted that the bill had been changed to provide for a study committee to study the issue. He stated that there are fairness issues that need to be solved. Senator Karen Tallian echoed these comments. She stated that the program operated by Portage Township Schools is a multi-county program, and that there is a need for a solution to the funding problem.

Representative Klinker then recognized Linda Warner, the Director of Adult Education for the Indiana Department of Education, who distributed a packet of information to Committee members. (See Exhibit C.)

Ms. Warner testified that the \$14 million annual appropriation for adult education had not been changed in nearly a decade. She stated that \$10 million in federal funding for adult education is also provided.

Ms. Warner said that to run an adult education program, typically both state and federal money must be used. She said that approximately 40,000 students receive services at 350 class sites, and that nearly 80% of adults who enter adult education programs have skills below the ninth-grade level.

Ms. Warner described a number of reports concerning adult education, including a 2008 report by the Indiana Chamber of Commerce, a report by the National Commission on Adult Literacy ("Reach Higher, America"), the report by the Indiana Institute for Working Families ("More than Just A GED") that had been distributed to the Committee by Ms. Finzel, and a July 2008 evaluation of Indiana's adult education services prepared by the National Adult Education Professional Development Consortium ("Access - Equity - Efficiency"). She also reported that the Sagamore Institute plans to release a study in early August.

Ms. Warner then described five priorities to enhance adult education access, equity, and efficiency:

- (1) Expanding eligible providers under state-funded services to include those eligible under federal funding.
- (2) Instituting an equitable delivery system that encourages a partnership of agencies (one of which would be the lead fiscal agent).
- (3) Simplifying the application and funding process by establishing one funding formula for a combination of state and federal funds.
- (4) Adding additional withdrawal criteria for students age 16 - 18 to allow for a withdrawal if it is considered to be in the educational interest of the student to do so.
- (5) Provide a modest increase in state funding.

Senator Brent Waltz questioned Ms. Warner concerning priorities between younger adults trying to achieve initial or basic skills and older adults who need to "re-tool" their skills because of job losses.

Representative Klinker then recognized Tim Holcomb, the director of the Four County Area Vocational Cooperative. Mr. Holcomb distributed a packet of informational material to Committee members. (See Exhibit D.) He explained that the Cooperative serves LaGrange, Steuben, Noble, and DeKalb counties, and that there are 11 school corporations participating in the Cooperative. He commented that high dropout rates are not associated only with urban areas.

Mr. Holcomb briefly described the different adult education services available: GED preparation; adult secondary credits; adult basic education; English as a second language; workplace education; and family literacy. Mr. Holcomb then noted that students are staying enrolled in adult education courses longer than in the past, in order to attain their goals. He stated that the total number of students served by the Cooperative had increased 73% over the period 2001 - 2008.

In response to a question from Senator Tallian, Mr. Holcomb explained that the Cooperative is generally the provider of adult education services, but that it partners with other entities in the delivery of some of these services. He stated that the Cooperative received approximately \$104,000 in federal funding, \$90,000 in state funding, a local support match of \$25,000 from school corporations, and additional support from donations. He noted that the support from the school corporations is evenly divided, even though they differ in size.

In response to additional questions, Mr. Holcomb also noted that the Cooperative's students are mostly between the ages of 25 and 36, although they range in age from 17 to 81. His goal is to keep students in the K-12 program, but that is not always possible.

Representative Klinker then recognized JoAnn Vorst, the director of the Lafayette Area Resource Academy ("LARA"). Ms. Vorst distributed a packet of informational material to Committee members (see Exhibit E), and she described the services and programs offered by LARA. She noted that it served approximately 1,700 students last year. She commented that state and federal funding is insufficient to pay all of the costs of adult education programs, and that it is necessary to obtain additional funding from grants. She noted that LARA is a United Way-funded agency, and she gave examples of grants obtained by LARA. Ms. Vorst also commented that, unlike some adult education administrators, she "wore only one hat" and was focused full-time on LARA's programs.

After questions by Committee members to Ms. Vorst, Representative Klinker then recognized LaVeta Franze of Lafayette, Indiana, as an example of success from adult education programs. Ms. Franze distributed to Committee members a magazine article concerning her experiences. (See Exhibit F.) Ms. Franze related to Committee members the obstacles she had faced, and how adult education programs had changed her life and the lives of her children. She noted the help and encouragement she had received from LARA, and she described her motivations for pursuing adult education. Representative Klinker also recognized Kevin Felder of Indianapolis, who described to the Committee his experiences with adult education. In response to questions from Committee members, Mr. Felder stated that the best aspect of his adult education was the great amount of one-on-one time with instructors. Ms. Franze noted that being creative and individualized in approaches to adult education students was also very important.

After additional questions to Mr. Felder and Ms. Franze, Representative Klinker recognized

Mr. Terry Hufford, school board president for Portage Township Schools. Mr. Hufford stated that there was a need for additional funding assistance for adult education from the State of Indiana. Representative Klinker recognized Tom Pappas, a member of the school board for Portage Township Schools. Mr. Pappas testified that the school board's first priority must be to K - 12 programs, and that they were facing a decision between putting money into adult education programs or into K - 12 programs. He noted that the school board had voted to stop adult education funding effective June 30, 2008, but that they had extended this cut-off by one year because of additional donations received. In addition to the need for full state funding of adult education programs, Mr. Pappas suggested putting these programs under one "umbrella".

Representative Klinker next recognized Michael Berta, superintendent of Portage Township Schools. Mr. Berta distributed a handout to Committee members. (See Exhibit G.) He stated that there is no question concerning the value of adult education, but he noted that the annual average deficit (2001 - 2006) for Portage Township Schools' adult education program was \$275,000. He explained that of this deficit, \$100,000 was paid from the school district's general fund, and \$61,500 was paid by other school districts, leaving an administrative/program cost of \$113,500 for Portage Township Schools.

Mr. Berta stated that the program serves six counties and approximately 2,500 students. He described the portion of his handout that showed the amounts billed to other school districts by Portage Township Schools and the amounts actually paid by those school districts. He stated that there had been no funding increase by the State for adult education programs in ten years, and he said that parents are demanding justification of why K - 12 program funds are being used for adult education. He also projected a 2010 funding shortfall of \$1.2 million for Portage Township Schools. He stated that the financial challenge to the school district is overwhelming, and he asked the Committee to find a permanent solution to funding adult education. In response to questions from Senator Tallian and Senator Sue Errington, Mr. Berta explained that the state reimbursement is based on the number of students and the number of classes, and he noted that Portage Township Schools traditionally had an adult education director who was devoted full-time to the program. Mr. Berta also stated that he was not aware of another entity that would pickup the adult education program if it were dropped by Portage Township Schools.

Representative Klinker commented that, as an educator, she recognizes that some people are not ready for a community college before going through an adult education program. Representative Klinker then recognized Linda Warner of the Indiana Department of Education. She stated that after nearly a decade of level funding for adult education, the Department would like a modest increase. Ms. Warner said that the Department was recommending an increase from \$14 million for each year of the biennium to \$16 million for each year. Ms. Warner noted that reimbursement from state funding is currently less than 100% of costs.

Ms. Warner explained that \$600,000 of the \$2 million annual increase would be used for a program to provide adult education students a seamless transition to college (which would build on an existing pilot program).

Senator Greg Walker asked about the extent to which the use of distance learning would be appropriate. Ms. Warner stated that currently some distance learning is being used, but that some students don't have computers or computer skills. In response to questions from the Committee, Ms. Warner explained that the allocation of state funds is made under a formula different from the formula for allocating federal funds, and that the state formula was from the 1990s. She also noted that approximately \$1.5 million dollars of costs are currently not reimbursed.

Senator Tallian asked whether the Indiana Department of Education was suggesting that Ivy Tech Community College assume responsibility for adult education programs. Ms. Warner answered that the Department is not recommending this, but it is suggesting that entities other than schools could run programs and receive funding. Senator Robert Deig asked Ms. Warner if she could estimate the statewide average cost to educate an adult education student. Ms. Warner stated that the combined state/federal/private funding was approximately \$900 per student. In response to a question from Senator Errington, Ms. Warner said that adult education services are available in every Indiana county, but not every county has a provider. The Department is trying to offer adult education programs at the same location where other government services are available, such as Work One Centers. The Department also recommends that each provider have a full-time director.

Representative Klinker commented that as state government tried to raise up Ivy Tech Community College, it might not be appropriate to bring in adult education students who are just re-entering the education process. Representative Klinker also asked whether the proposed \$16 million appropriation was sufficient.

Representative Klinker adjourned the meeting at 3:40 p.m.